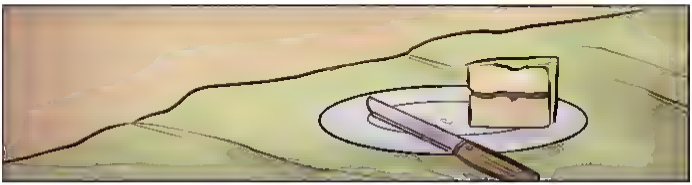
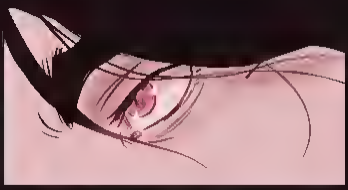
UNDER THE ASCOTS

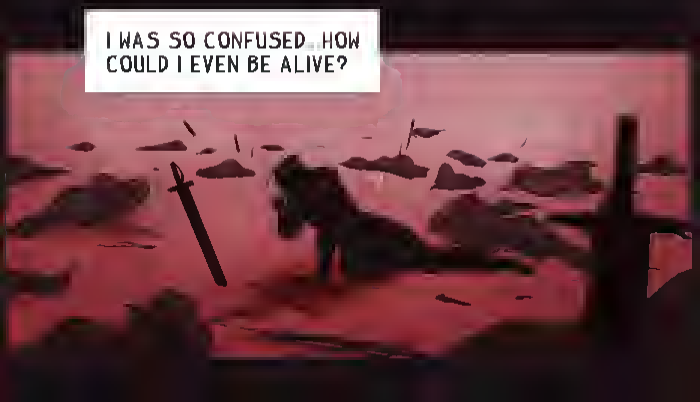


YOU DIED...
HOW OLD WERE YOU AT THE TIME?
I'D JUST TURNED TWENTY-EIGHT...

AND I ACTUALLY WELCOMED DEATH.
THE RESTFUL FINALITY OF IT...

...UNTIL I WOKE UP.



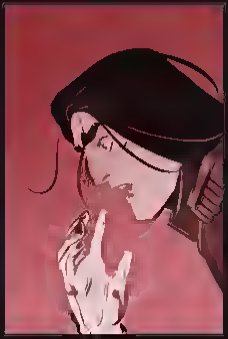

I WAS SO CONFUSED...HOW COULD I EVEN BE ALIVE?

THE SECOND THING I NOTICED WAS THAT MY FOREHEAD BURNED

WHILST MY OTHER WOUNDS DIDN'T SO MUCH AS TWINGE

WHEN I SAW THE SYMBOL, I KNEW WHAT IT MEANT...AND MY MIND WAS REELING...

...I WAS OVERWHELMED. WHY WAS THIS HAPPENING TO ME?

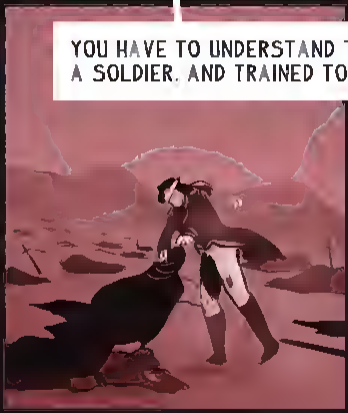


I TENDED TO MYSELF AS BEST I COULD

PULL

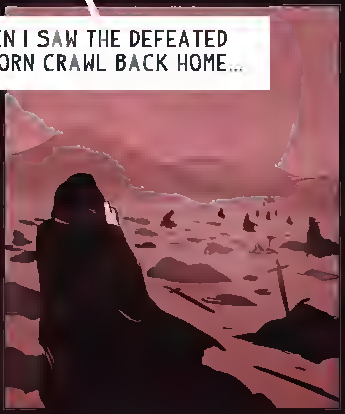
AND TOOK WHAT I COULD FROM THE BATTLEFIELD.

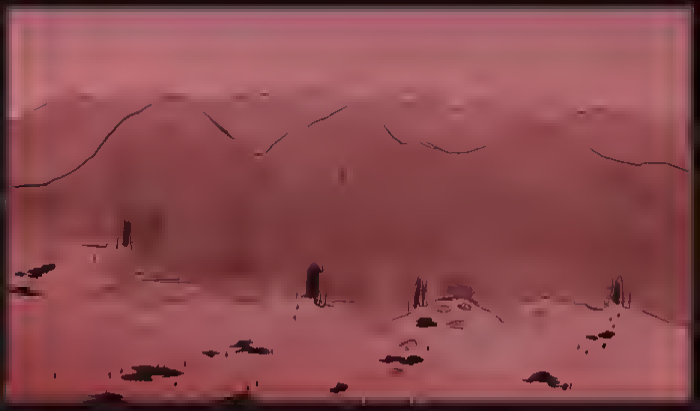
YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT I WAS A SOLDIER. AND TRAINED TO SURVIVE...

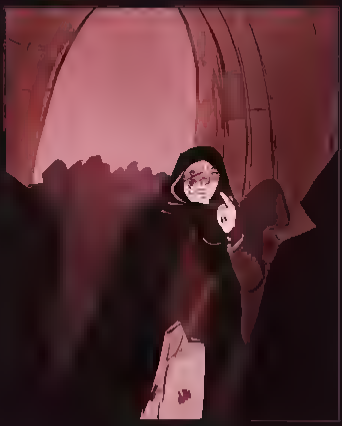


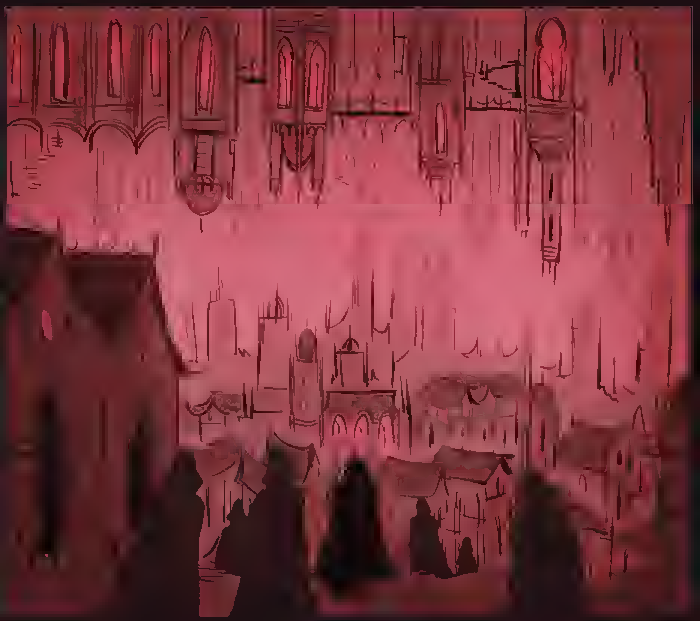
...AND I KNEW THAT GOLGOTHA WAS MY BEST OPTION. THE MISTRESS HAD BEEN RIGHT...THE WAR WAS ENDING.

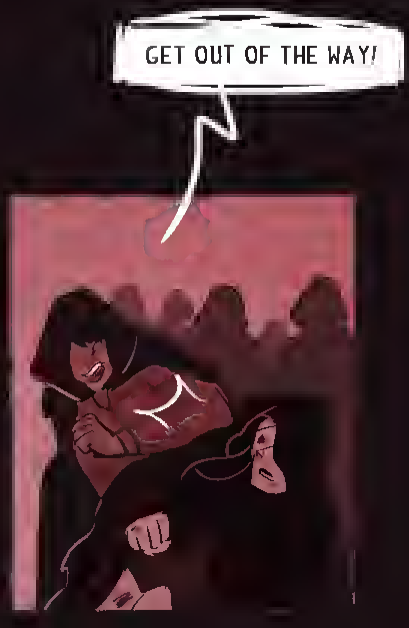
SO WHEN I SAW THE DEFEATED MOONBORN CRAWL BACK HOME...









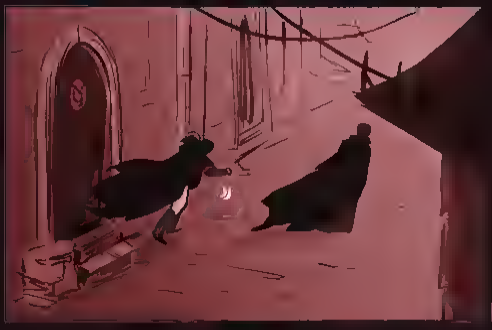

GET OUT OF THE WAY!

HISSS

WELL IF IT ISN'T MY
LITTLE CAPTAIN

THIS CERTAINLY IS AN AWKWARD DEVELOPMENT.

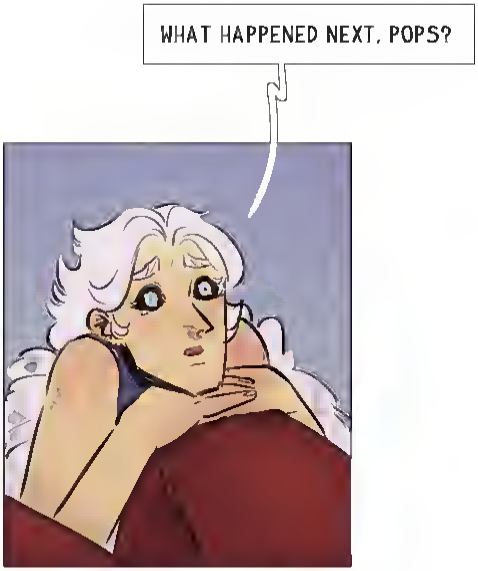
DON'T JUST SIT THERE. COME.



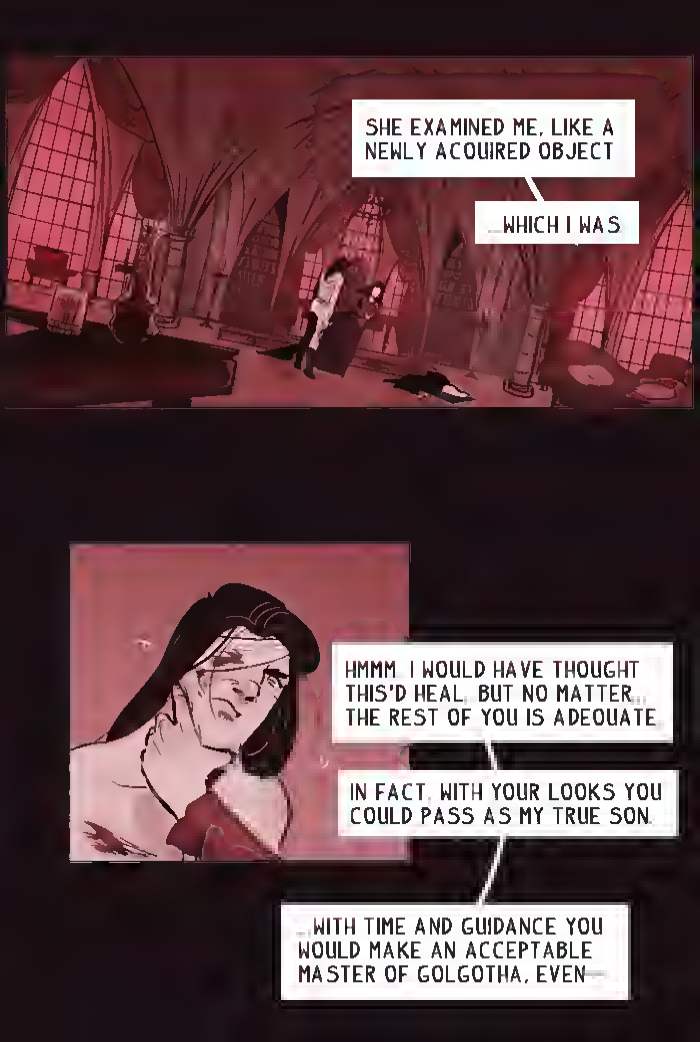
THE DAGGER LED HER TO YOU WHEN YOU WERE REBORN

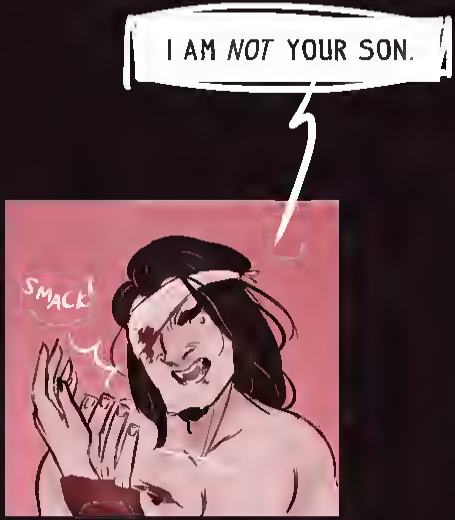
YES, ALL OF OUR WEAPONS ACT LIKE HOMING BEACONS AT BIRTH

AND MOST LIKELY HOW THE GHATIKAN IS CONSISTENTLY FOUND BY THE ASSASSINS


WHAT HAPPENED NEXT, POPS?

IT HAD BELONGED TO THE PREVIOUS MASTER OF GOLGOTHA. BOTH HER AND MY PREDECESSOR.


SHE EXAMINED ME, LIKE A NEWLY ACQUIRED OBJECT
...WHICH I WAS
HMMM. I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THIS'D HEAL. BUT NO MATTER... THE REST OF YOU IS ADEQUATE
IN FACT, WITH YOUR LOOKS YOU COULD PASS AS MY TRUE SON.
...WITH TIME AND GUIDANCE YOU WOULD MAKE AN ACCEPTABLE MASTER OF GOLGOTHA, EVEN—


I AM *NOT* YOUR SON.
SMACK!

I DON'T WANT--
--ANY OF THIS!
SMASH!

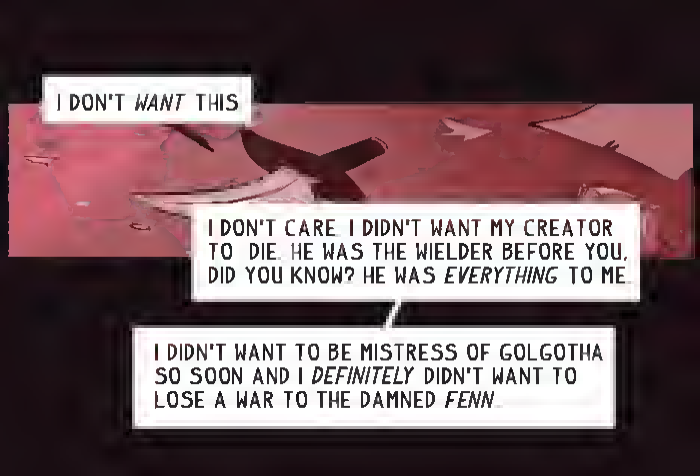
...I DIDN'T TAKE IT WELL.

AND *LILLIAN*...I NEED TO GO BACK. I PROMISED HER I WOULD--SHE'S WAITING FOR ME TO GO BACK--

I *PROMISED*...

AND THROW ANOTHER TANTRUM LIKE THIS ONE? WHOEVER SHE IS, SHE'S BETTER OFF BELIEVING YOU'RE DEAD.

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN ABOUT THE WAR? WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN IF YOU SHOW UP AS A MOONBORN IN BASILEIA NOW? *STUPID BOY.*


I DON'T *WANT* THIS
I DON'T CARE. I DIDN'T WANT MY CREATOR TO DIE. HE WAS THE WIELDER BEFORE YOU, DID YOU KNOW? HE WAS *EVERYTHING* TO ME.
I DIDN'T WANT TO BE MISTRESS OF GOLGOTHA SO SOON AND I *DEFINITELY* DIDN'T WANT TO LOSE A WAR TO THE DAMNED *FENN*.

I WISH TO DIE
YOU WANT TO STAND IN THE DESERT SUN UNTIL YOU WITHER? PLUNGE A DAGGER INTO YOUR HEART? GO!
I TROUBLE MYSELF WITH PROCREATING RESPONSIBLY, TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF GOLGOTHA, AND ALL I GET IS AN UNGRATEFUL WIELDER *BRAT*

WELL, *TOUGH*. YOU ALSO HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO THE WIELDERS WAITING TO BE BORN.
NOW, *GET UP* AND STOP SNIVELLING

SHE TAUGHT ME HOW TO FEED.
HOW TO USE MY NEW SENSES.

SHE TRAINED ME...SHOWED ME HOW TO COMPENSATE FOR MY REDUCED VISION.

I THINK SHE ALSO TRIED TO GROOM ME AS HER EVENTUAL SUCCESSOR. BUT I'M NO MASTER... NOR DO I WISH TO BE

I NEVER STOPPED THINKING ABOUT MY SISTER AND HOW I COULD TRY TO GET BACK TO HER

...BUT I WAS AFRAID OF WHAT I HAD BECOME. A BLOOD-SOAKED REPLICA OF MY PREVIOUS SELF. IT WAS EASIER TO LET THE YEARS PASS...

I MELLOWED WITH TIME. RESIGNED MYSELF.

INDIFFERENCE MEANT I WOULDN'T HAVE TO HURT.

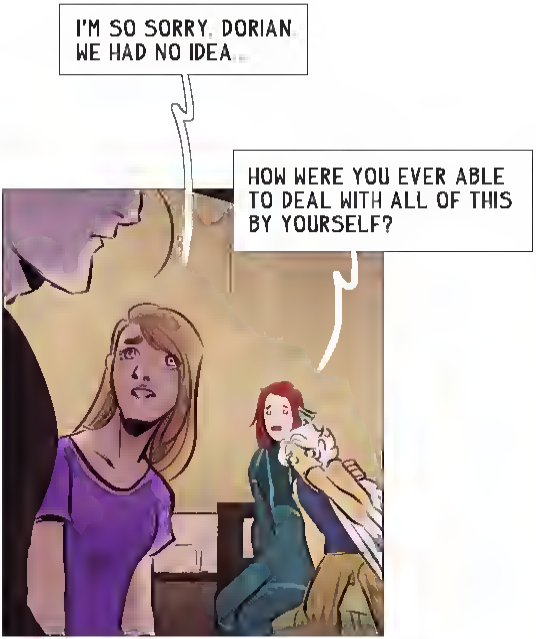
LIKE THEM? A GIFT FROM BASILEIA. TO STORE PRISONERS' BLOOD
THEY HAVE RIGHTS NOW, FANCY THAT. WE HAVE TO TAKE A LITRE AT A TIME.
WHY DID YOU WANT TO SEE ME

THIS GIFT IS TO BUTTER ME UP AND PERSUADE ME TO SEND YOU TO BASILEIA WHEN THE TIME COMES
ALL OF THE WIELDERS HAVE BEEN BORN, DORIAN.

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO...BABYSIT THEM?

I THINK ANOTHER TWENTY YEARS SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO WORK ON THAT ATTITUDE. HMM?

TWENTY YEARS WAS NOTHING COMPARED TO THE SEVENTY I HAD ALREADY SPENT IN GOLGOTHA...
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I WOULD BE GOING BACK TO THE CAPITAL...
OVERCOME BY GUILT KNOWING THAT MY SISTER HAD SURELY DIED WITHOUT EVER SEEING ME AGAIN...


I'M SO SORRY, DORIAN
WE HAD NO IDEA...
HOW WERE YOU EVER ABLE TO DEAL WITH ALL OF THIS BY YOURSELF?

I WAS USED TO IT. I WANTED TO RETURN ALONE...I NEEDED TO.

I REFUSED THE ESCORT THE MISTRESS OFFERED ME FOR THE JOURNEY, ACCEPTING ONLY THE DAGGER AND A SCROLL THAT SHE INSISTED I KEEP WITH ME.

...A--A SCROLL?

...WHAT KIND OF SCROLL? YOU HAVE ONE OF THOSE?

JUST AN OLD SCROLL THAT WAS PASSED DOWN TO THE MISTRESS BY HER CREATOR

SHE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT IT WAS FOR, ONLY THAT SHE HAD INSTRUCTIONS TO GIVE IT TO ME. WHY DO YOU ASK?

I--I HAVE A SCROLL TOO! AN OLD ONE--

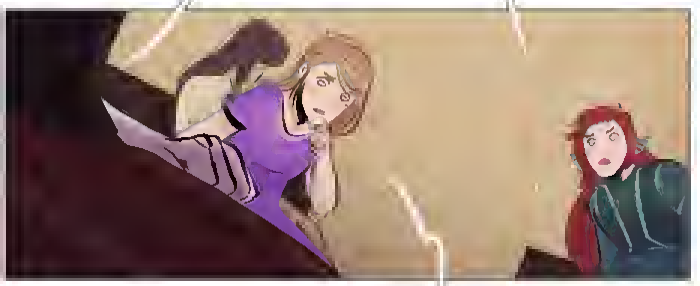
I ALSO HAVE A SIMILAR SCROLL, WHICH I AM STUDYING ALONGSIDE YOURS, MATTIE.
...WAIT!
YOU GUYS HAVE PAPER THINGIES?! I HAVE A COUPLE OF 'EM! THEY'RE ALL RIPPED UP AND HAVE, LIKE--
FADED WRITING. MY BROTHER FOUND ONE IN A FENN CAVE

YEAH! YEAH! AND WHEN YOU TOUCH IT YOU GET...UH...
YOU SEE...THINGS. ABOUT THE FIRST WIELDERS.

YES! YOU TOO?!
OH MY GOSH, I THOUGHT I WAS THE ONLY ONE!
I THOUGHT I WAS GOIN' *CRAZY!*

I HAVEN'T SEEN ANYTHING... HOW ABOUT YOU DORIAN?

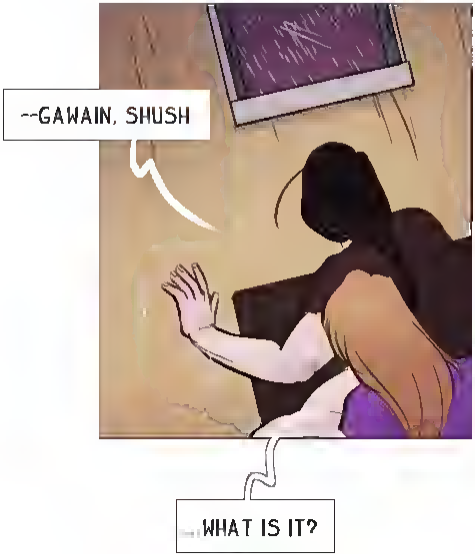
NO. BUT I HAVEN'T TOUCHED MINE, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT IT SAYS



SIX SCROLLS... I WONDER IF THE GHATIKAN HAS ONE TOO?

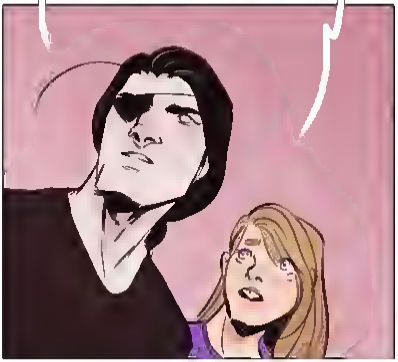
AAARGH! ARE WE EVER GONNA FIND HIM??

WE'RE GONNA GET KILLED FIRST, OR WORSE...BE THE ONLY LAME WIELDERS IN *HISTORY* TO MAKE IT TO OLD AGE!


--GAWAIN, SHUSH
...WHAT IS IT?

I THOUGHT I HEARD SOMETHING... NOT THE RAIN, SOMETHING ELSE...

IF IT'S AN INTRUDER, THE ALARM SYSTEM WOULD HAVE PICKED THEM UP BY NOW...UNLESS...



YEAH. WE ALL KNOW WHAT HAPPENED LAST TIME. LET'S GO CHECK IT OUT.

IT'S GETTING CLOSER

SPLAT!

WAIT! IT'S ME!

I'M HERE!
...I'M HERE...

WE ARE THE SUCKIEST DETECTIVES *EVER*